Every development economist knows it. The World Bank knows it: the education of girls is the surest way to reduce poverty. If there is to be a serious effort to improve the condition of the billions of people deprived of the basic ingredients of a decent life, schools in poor countries have to be full of girls as well as boys. The reason is simple: all the evidence shows that taking girls out of the fields and homes, and putting them behind desks, raises economic productivity, lowers infant and maternal mortality, reduces fertility rates, and improves environmental management. Countries that have pursued gender equality over the past three to four decades have grown faster and become more equal.

The education of girls is a cause worth fighting for. Education is a human right, and the denial of it to girls, in the systematic way it is denied in some countries, is a strong criticism of the world community in the 21st century. To be born a girl in a rural area in an underdeveloped country means leading a life without school or clean water. Marriage and babies come too early, there are too many births and children who die of preventable diseases, back-breaking work in the fields, subordination to one’s husband and his family, and an early death. Moreover, the uneducated woman transmits to her children the same doomed life. Every year, almost 12 million children under the age of five needlessly die of infectious diseases associated with poverty, but each additional year spent by their mothers in primary school lowers the risk of premature child deaths by about 8 percent. In Pakistan, an extra year of school for 1,000 girls could prevent 60 infant deaths.

There are places that show how different things can be. In the southern India state of Kerala, communist in politics, Christian in ideology, where literacy is almost universal, the infant mortality rate is the lowest in the developing world. Schooling is the route to lowering infant mortality. Each extra year of school also reduces the birth-rate and cuts maternal deaths. In Brazil, illiterate women have an average of 6.5 children, whereas those with secondary education have 2.5.

With women and girls being the main farmers in Africa and southern Asia, their education offers a chance to develop more efficient farming practices, improve output, and raise awareness of the ecological needs of the land with tree planting and crop rotation. Malnutrition is at a high level in these regions, and environmental damage is a threat that worsens the global warming affecting us all. In this situation, the world community cannot afford to ignore this possibility for positive change.

PART A. Answer the following question referring to the text.

What are two benefits of educating girls? IN YOUR OWN WORDS, explain in 3-4 sentences.

____________________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
PART B. You are writing for the magazine called EIGHTEEN. Your assignment is to write a paragraph of 180-220 words discussing whether attending a boarding school affects a teenager’s personality in a POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAY.

Write your paragraph on the lines provided here.

*Boarding school: a type of school where some or all students not only study but also live during term time with their fellow students and possibly teachers.
WRITING SECTION (20 pts.)

Part A. (5 pts.)

Any two of the following benefits of educating girls should be included in the answer with adequate support in the form of examples and/or explanation etc. from the text:
- reduces poverty/raises economic productivity
- lowers infant and maternal mortality
- reduces fertility rates
- improves environmental management